



## STATE OF UTAH

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# *“Investing in Utah’s Next ‘Greatest Generation’ ”*

*2015 State of the State Address  
Utah Governor Gary R. Herbert  
January 28, 2015*

Speaker Hughes, President Niederhauser, members of the Legislature, Lt. Governor and Mrs. Cox, Utah’s First Lady, my wife Jeanette, and my fellow Utahns

I am pleased to join with you to report on the state of our state, though I do so with a heavy heart because of the recent loss of former House Speaker Becky Lockhart. She will be remembered as a talented legislator, a strong leader and as a dedicated public servant who made history as the first woman to preside over the Utah House of Representatives.

Our state is a better place because of her work in this chamber. On behalf of all Utahns, I express my condolences to her family, including her husband, Stan, and her daughter Hannah who are here with us tonight.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. During that conflict, millions of Americans served and 407,000 gave their lives to defend our freedoms and safeguard the torch of liberty.

Today, we call these veterans “America’s Greatest Generation.” They weathered the Great Depression and fought and won the most consequential war the world has ever seen.

One of them is Casey Kunimura of North Ogden. He and other Americans of Japanese heritage served in the most decorated U.S. military unit in history, the Army’s 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

We are privileged this evening to have with us Master Sergeant Kunimura and his wife Dorothy.

Our World War II generation met the challenges of their time. While many served abroad, Utahns on the home front bought war bonds, planted victory gardens, and donated materials needed for the war effort. Everyone worked and sacrificed together to secure victory.

Now, I would like to introduce you to some other very special guests – students from Mountain View Elementary in Salt Lake City, accompanied by Principal Kenneth Limb and Assistant Principal Jennifer Mayer-Glenn.

Just as our World War II veterans showed extraordinary valor in becoming America's Greatest Generation of the 20th century, these students symbolize the potential of youth all across Utah to become the Greatest Generation of the 21st century.

Progress is never easy. The challenges are complex. But each of us has a role to play and must do our part. I reach out to you tonight with a renewed spirit of collaboration and a steadfast resolve. We will do the hard things. We will also do the right things. And we will be the problem-solvers in this difficult era of political gridlock and divisiveness.

Our state's growing economy has us in a good position to invest in the rising generation. Our revenue is up, our job growth is up, and our unemployment rate is down to 3 ½ percent.

When I stood before you in 2012, we set a goal to create 100,000 private sector jobs in 1,000 days. When our 1,000 days were up, not only did we meet our goal, but we exceeded it by more than 10 percent, creating more than 112,000 jobs. That is 112,000 Utahns—our friends and our neighbors—who can now work toward achieving their goals and realizing their dreams.

We also saved taxpayer dollars by making government more efficient. I have charged every state agency with improving performance by 25 percent and—Good News!—we are on track to hit that target.

As a state we are living within our means and setting aside money for unforeseen challenges that may lie ahead. Today, we have fewer state employees per resident than we did 15 years ago. We have approximately \$470 million in the Rainy Day Fund, which is more than we had before the Great Recession. And we concluded the 2014 fiscal year with a revenue surplus of \$166 million.

Economic recovery has been our top priority for the past six years. Thanks to the good work of you in the Legislature and businesses in the private sector, Utah is nationally recognized today as the home of one of the strongest and most diverse economies in America.

As a result, we now have the ability to invest in important areas that will drive our economy for decades to come. None of these areas is more important to Utah's continued success than education.

Many things are going well in our schools. We applaud the work of teachers who have helped make Utah number one in ACT scores among states where all students take the exam. Teachers also helped Utah 8th-graders rank in the Top 10 in science both nationally and internationally.

It is also worth noting that the U.S. Chamber of Commerce calls Utah's education system the best return on investment of any state in the nation.

As you have heard me say before: "Education is not *all* about the money, but it is *some* about the money."

We have the means to increase our education investment by approximately \$500 million in new money. That would be the largest true increase in student funding for public education in 25 years, raising the total of new money going to education over the past four years to \$1.3 billion. This session we should continue our collective efforts to give our students and teachers the financial support that they need to succeed.

As important as funding education is, it is even more important to make each and every dollar count by setting benchmarks for what we will achieve with that investment.

Yogi Berra said, "If you don't know where you are going, you'll end up someplace else."

I am working with elected officials, education leaders and other stakeholders to develop a comprehensive 10-year education plan so we know where we are going and we end up exactly where we want to be. This plan will allow us to better connect the money we invest to improved outcomes for all students, and provide greater academic achievement. Part of that plan is for Utah to become a Top 10 state in graduation rates, ACT scores, and in math and in literacy.

There is also a need for a more robust discussion in our schools about the founding principles of this country. Our students must understand the importance of the United States Constitution, our free market economy and the responsibility we all share as Utahns and as Americans to participate in the democratic process. We need to understand the sacrifices of past generations that have made America great. Our young people must learn those lessons and never, ever forget them.

Local school administrators and their boards know more about the needs of their students than anyone. As champions for local control, we should not only ensure that they have the resources they need, but we should empower them to apply those dollars where they are needed the most.

Whether that means raising teacher salaries, hiring more teachers to reduce class sizes, investing in more technology, increasing the number of guidance counselors, or addressing a variety of other high priority needs—with appropriate accountability measures in place, local school districts and charter schools should be in control of those decisions.

As we continue to step up our investment in education, we must not sidestep our commitment to the principle of local control.

Next week I will join with Attorney General Sean Reyes and others to deliver a report to the state school board reaffirming that our state is now, and always will be, in control of every aspect of our education system. Rest assured, we will assert our rights to exercise local control over what we teach and how we teach it.

We will never back away from the challenge that every state in America faces today—the constant overreach of the federal government. If states fail to stand up and speak out for our right to self-determination, we will lose that right to an ever-expanding federal bureaucracy.

Washington really does believe that “one-size-fits-all;” they really do believe that a Washington bureaucrat knows better than a Utah parent or a Utah teacher; and they really do believe that the federal government can manage our affairs more efficiently than we can here in our home state.

They believe it. I don’t believe it. And I know you don’t believe it, either.

This principle of self-determination not only applies to education; it applies equally to health care and to the management of our public lands.

I believe that the Affordable Care Act is a deeply flawed and unacceptable piece of legislation. But short of the opportunity to “repeal and replace,” which I would endorse, we have but one option—to make some kind of lemonade out the lemons we have been given.

That is why we created Healthy Utah. It is a plan that respects our own taxpayers, promotes individual responsibility and supports private markets. As complex as this issue is, there are three main reasons why Healthy Utah is a responsible solution.

First, the Affordable Care Act—which is the law of the land—requires Utahns to pay almost \$800 million in new taxes each year. The choice before us is stark: we can either watch our hard-earned tax dollars remain on the table in Washington, D.C., primarily benefiting other states, or we can bring back a significant amount of our own money to Utah to be spent on Utahns. When it comes to expanding health coverage for uninsured Utahns, accepting the benefits is optional, but paying the taxes is mandatory.

Second, Healthy Utah will help fix the problem of nearly 100,000 people who too often use our health care system in the most inefficient and expensive ways. It’s better to give them access to private health insurance rather than have them continue to receive their health care in emergency rooms. Because, when this happens, the quality of our health care goes down and the costs go up for everyone.

Third, Healthy Utah addresses the health care needs of our citizens while respecting core Utah values. Chief among these are self-reliance and the dignity of work. We can connect people in need of health insurance with programs proven to help them improve their employment, putting them on a path to self-reliance.

Now I know this is a challenging issue. But I also recognize we have been elected by the people to resolve the tough issues and to resolve them together. I don’t support the Affordable Care Act, but it’s the hand we have been dealt.

Unfortunately, we cannot prevent billions of Utah taxpayer dollars from being sent to Washington, D.C., but I applaud both President Niederhauser and Speaker Hughes for wisely

acknowledging that “doing nothing is not an option.” I pledge to work with them, and with all of you, to make sure that we do the right thing—together—for the people of Utah.

We must also stand up to federal overreach when it comes to our public lands. Utah is, and will always be, a public lands state. The question is, who will manage our public lands most effectively—the best-managed state in America, or the federal government that is 18 trillion dollars in debt? The answer is obvious.

I strongly support the Public Lands Initiative championed by Congressmen Rob Bishop and Jason Chaffetz. I will continue to work shoulder-to-shoulder with our federal delegation and interested Utahns to resolve our public lands issues.

Utahns are significantly impacted by federal decisions concerning our public lands, and Utahns must have a strong voice and role in managing those lands. We value our partnership with the federal government in areas of shared responsibility, but we will never be content to be a silent or a junior partner.

In that regard, the state also needs to stand up and speak out to ensure that our most precious religious liberties are protected. I firmly believe that, to protect the personally held values of people on all sides of this issue, any advancement of non-discrimination legislation should be coupled with legislation to safeguard protections to religious freedom.

I am confident that, as elected officials, we can work together with religious, business and civic leaders, as well as the LGBT community, to develop policies that treat all people with dignity and respect.

As a result of our abundant economic opportunity and our enviable quality of life, Utah is now among the fastest-growing states in America. Our population is expected to double by 2060. Our task is to take advantage of the opportunities that come with growth, while addressing the challenges that growth presents.

In transportation, for example, maintaining our existing roads and building new ones to accommodate a growing population will cost tens of billions of dollars. While we have sufficient funding for all the road projects currently planned, projections show that our current revenue sources fall \$11 billion short of what will be required for our long-term state transportation needs.

I look forward to working with you in the Legislature this session to address this important issue. The time to have a meaningful discussion about long-term solutions to our transportation funding is now.

This is also the year to pass meaningful corrections and criminal justice reform.

We have one of the lowest incarceration rates in the country; unfortunately, it’s still too high. Part of the problem is that nearly half of all Utah inmates return to prison within three years of release. We can change these results, but not without meaningful reforms. Representative Eric

Hutchings and Senator Stuart Adams are leading this effort. This is about more than simply building a new prison; this is about rebuilding lives.

Nothing is more fundamental to our quality of life in Utah than the water we drink and the air we breathe. Without them, there is no life and there is no economy.

Stakeholders across our state are working diligently to ensure that we will have enough water to support our growing population. Doing so will require us to conserve more water, to invest more in our water infrastructure and to develop future water sources in fiscally and environmentally responsible ways.

Air quality has long been an issue in Utah—even predating our statehood. Today, our efforts to improve Utah’s air quality are making a positive difference. Over the past decade, we have added 350,000 people along the Wasatch Front while, at the same time, decreasing our total emissions by 35 percent.

When I addressed you a year ago, I called for an accelerated transition to cleaner Tier 3 fuels and automobiles. I have since met with the top executives of our refineries and received commitments that they will work toward producing these fuels ahead of the federal deadline. We are also working to expedite the arrival of Tier 3 vehicles to our state.

We further required business and industry to install stringent new emission controls, and we enacted 31 new state rules to reduce pollution. As a result, business is investing hundreds of millions of dollars in new technology to help clean our air.

While thoughtful regulation is an important tool for improving air quality, I recognize its potential to adversely impact individuals and small businesses. To ease such impacts, we have allocated \$1.3 million in grant money through the Air Assist program to help small businesses cut emissions. And I am working with Representative Stephen Handy to reintroduce a bill to invest \$20 million to replace old school buses with cleaner, lower-emission models.

I thank you in the Legislature who championed the eight air-quality bills I proudly signed last year. You helped lead the charge to do more to improve air quality than any previous Legislature on record.

Like you, I have always been a strong advocate of open and honest government.

I am working with Representative Mike McKell, Senator Deidre Henderson and Attorney General Sean Reyes to bring forward a proposal this session that would create a new office of Inspector General -- one that will act as an independent entity to elevate and ensure the highest levels of ethics and official conduct in state government. Ensuring the highest standards of open, honest government must always be our top priority.

These are just some of the challenges we must overcome if our young people are to reach their potential to become the Greatest Generation of the 21st century.

Our distinguished World War II veterans, like Master Sergeant Kunimura, stood together to withstand one of the greatest evils the world has ever known. And all across the country, Utahns and other Americans united to work and to stand with them.

Sadly, 70 years later, much of America is mired in political gridlock. Divisiveness too often characterizes our national political discourse and petty partisanship too often trumps common sense and the common good.

In Utah, I'm proud we do things differently. We have a history of setting aside our differences and working together to accomplish extraordinary things.

For example, many settlers during America's 19th-century push west did little for those who would come after them. On the other hand, Utah's pioneers labored to ease the way of those who would follow in their footsteps.

They removed obstacles on the trail; they built bridges and rafts that later settlers could use to cross rivers; and they planted crops for others to harvest. They understood the concept of the Greek proverb, which says: "A society grows great when people plant trees in whose shade they know they shall never sit."

More than 165 years later, we are still a people who work together to solve problems and ease the passage for those who follow in our footsteps.

The state of our state is exceptionally strong, but not without significant challenge. We can make it stronger by investing and working together to ensure an even brighter tomorrow for the "Greatest Generation" yet to come.

Our World War II generation is passing the torch to us. They rose to the challenges of their time. It is incumbent upon us to rise and meet the challenges of our time, and to pave the way for our children and our grandchildren to meet theirs.

This is our time... This is our charge... This is our moment!

May God bless us all in this endeavor, may God bless America, and may God continue to bless the Great State of Utah and her people.

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